

MAKING THE BLIND MAN AN ASSET
INSTEAD OF A LIABILITY

Marguerite Arnold

HV1711 A

HV1711
A



**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

MAKING THE BLIND MAN AN ASSET INSTEAD OF A LIABILITY

By Marguerite Arnold

THE blind man who can be taught to see and to engage in self-supporting work is one of the signal achievements of modern science as applied to industry. Just as, in the history of the race, centuries had to pass before it entered into the head of man to use some handy object as a tool, generations have had to pass before the blind could be haled from their world of darkness and taught to labor by means of instruments specially designed for them. In large and increasing numbers sightless people are going out into the industrial world today as co-workers with those who can use their eyes as well as hands.

In Cleveland, Ohio, according to figures published in *The Iron Age*, there are eighty-one blind men and women working in forty different factories. The sightless in the metal industries there are proficient in sixty-nine manufacturing operations. Similarly, in Philadelphia, blind people are employed by the Miller Lock Company to operate drill presses. Their entrance was accidental. During the war, on account of factory maladjustments, old-fashioned single-spindle drill presses had to be introduced. The boys who operated them were seen to spend a great deal of time looking about. Out of this observation grew the employment of blind workers to operate the presses. They quickly learned all that a drill hand has to do: feed shackles, start and stop the machine, turn the coolant on and off. They increased in number, and, with a supervisor to look after their affairs, formed a department of their own.

In May, 1917, a firm engaged in manufacturing electrical machinery at Ampere, New Jersey, invited a few blind people to come into the factory and try the taking of armature coils. This experiment was watched with great interest by the United States Government. By the spring of 1918 there were thirty-five blind employees in the plant. According to a recent authority ("The Blind," Harry Best, Macmillan,

1919) there are in the United States thirty-nine industrial establishments for the blind. These fall into four groups: industrial schools where trades are taught; industrial homes; workshops with wages; and combinations of homes and shops. None of these is self-supporting. None of them entirely removes the handicap of the blind man, tho all serve to keep him profitably employed.

Chicago was among the first cities of the country to recognize that the normal blind are industrial material if they have proper training, and to work out a system of contacts with the manufacturing world while carrying on such training. The Chicago Improvement Association for Blind People, in June, 1919, known as the Chicago Light-house, started a factory training and employment department in connection with the vocational training school for the adult blind maintained by this organization.

The inspiration of such a departure in the education of the blind came out of the war in the remarkable rehabilitation of blind combatants abroad, and in this country at Evergreen, Maryland. The Chicago Association placed in charge of its industrial department Captain Earl Douglas, just returned from over-seas duty with the A.E.F.

According to the tests made at Evergreen with otherwise normal young men who had given their sight for their country, blindness is a thirty per cent handicap, not a total disability. Accordingly, the Chicago Association set out to provide the thirty per cent additional vocational education that would place the blind man on an equal footing with those who can see.

The method employed was to study the individual and to develop any talent or ability latent in him. From the first the student was paid nine dollars a week. Friendly firms supplied simple operations for the learners. Captain Douglas won over one factory after another to an interest in the undertaking, and in a single month twenty blind men and five blind women

Current Opinion, April 1921

H V 1711

7

copy 2

1350M 96814

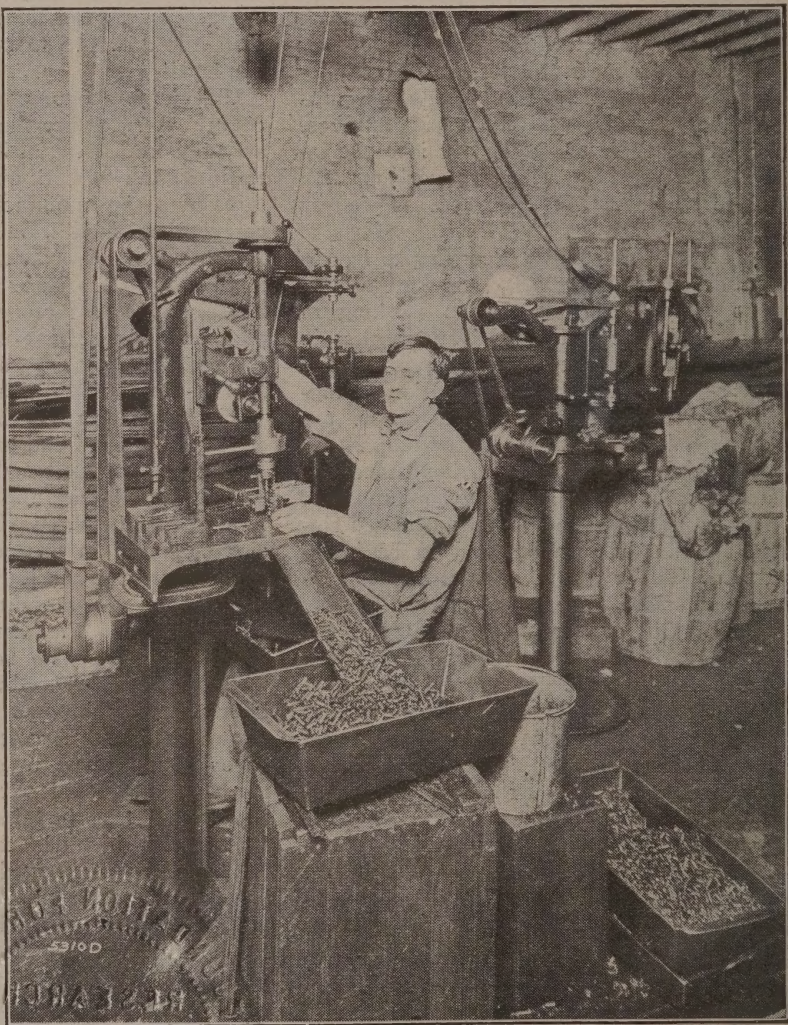
were placed in factories in Chicago, a prodigious feat. Each had been taught some simple operation, which Captain Douglas demonstrated could be done, and then placed where he could perform that operation profitably.

An expert training in motion economy and in the use of tools places the visually handicapped on an equality with the ordinary workman. In 1920, one hundred and twenty-one blind persons became self-supporting wage-earners through the Chicago Association. Twenty-four workers were employed by a go-cart factory, where they earn from \$22.50 to \$35.00 a week. These men were trained by a blind instructor.

Miss Edith L. Swift, director of the Chicago Improvement Association for Blind People, says of the blind man's entrance into industrial fields, "People must be made to see that the blind or visually handicapped are not all alike because they cannot see in the ordinary sense of the word. They have varying abilities, and, after a study of their aptitudes and careful training, they can be so placed that they can hold their own with other normal

workmen. Blind men are only physically handicapped and, once they are given an opportunity to show their mental and spiritual qualities, they will make the man who can see look to his laurels. Anything they may lose in speed they make up in accuracy."

Chair - caning, broom - making; carpet - weaving, are all very well in their way; but the unsighted are filled with joy when they find themselves at last removed from the ghostly life of the abnormal into the realm of the normal man's job.



International Photo

TAPPING MACHINE OPERATOR IN AN ELECTRIC PLANT

This man lost his sight but not his job, as the Chicago Lighthouse trained him to do this work by touch.

Contrary to the general notion, the unsighted do not have a greater intensity of perception through the other senses. There is really no difference in the native sense capacity, but only in the ability to use that sense capacity. A blind man can count the trees he passes on a walk. Is it strange that blind men actually do assemble ringers on telephones, tap ball joints, assist core makers, sort copper from asbestos, count by weight?

A blind man can frequently tell you what fences are made of, or whether there are any fences. He can distinguish between a

lamp-post and a tree. It is not therefore miraculous that a blind man can be at home in a vast machine shop where a single mis-step means death. That he should clean castings, etch electric bulbs, assemble radiator parts and sandpaper furniture is a logical thing. These are some of the operations that the visually handicapped are actually performing in factories with the sighted; assembling piece parts for automatic telephones, piece parts of motors, of phonographs, of gasoline lamps, of hermetic sealing caps, and so on; folding paper cartons, towels; wrapping furniture, numbering billiard balls, and soon.

The first blind massage class in America was taught by Peter J. Peel of Chicago. Six men and two women were graduated from this class, two of whom were taken by the government to give treatment to wounded soldiers at Fort Sheridan.

Most brilliant has been the work of blind textile weavers. In Chicago, the designs are translated into braille, and the draperies sell for \$5 to \$18 a yard. Twenty-five exhibition pieces were passed upon by the Artists' Guild as perfect specimens of the art.

A recent census reports 4,648 gainfully employed blind



International Photo

ASSEMBLING TELEPHONES BY THE SENSE OF TOUCH

Self-supporting employment is being furnished to an industrial army of blind men and women in this country.

persons in the United States who returned special schedules. But 1,891 of these were found to be self-supporting. The others receive either government or private assistance. Of those reporting, four-fifths of the male blind were able to earn only a sum below \$500.00. More than one-half earn an amount below \$200 per year. How many blind were employed in factories at the time of the census is not determined. Probably none.

The work in Cleveland, Ampere, Chicago and other places points to one important thing—the extension of opportunity to the blind to enter industry and to find those operations which they are fitted to perform. Their abilities vary as do the abilities of normal people, and blindness is not frequently a cause of failure so much as inaptitude for the thing. What is needed is an open mind on the part of the employing public which will admit of full experimentation.

STRIKE INSURANCE TO CURE AND PREVENT INDUSTRIAL ILLS

TO what extent will strike insurance, which is now in operation in several hundred industrial establishments, solve the problem of industrial unrest in America? Charles W. Wood, writing in the *New York World*, is confident that it will bring about some notable changes in our industrial organization, altho Emlen T. Littell, vice-president and secretary of the Employers Mutual Insurance and Service Company, of Baltimore, which is a pioneer in writing this new form of insurance, declares that it is not a gun aimed at organized labor.

Today, we read, the strike hazard in American industry is about fifteen times greater than the fire hazard, but this insurance official thinks that before long the risks will be about equal. Strike insurance does not promise to abolish strikes but it promises to establish a science of industrial hygiene in place of the hit-or-miss methods of treatment applied to labor troubles today. The plan is eventually to unite all the large employers of this country into one organization and "to achieve co-operation with labor for continuous production." Most strikes, it is asserted, are called for the primary purpose of injuring an employer financially. Consequently it is believed that knowledge on the part of the workers that the employer is insured against such injury will automatically prevent a large percentage of such strikes. Incidentally, we read, it is not an easy matter for an employer to obtain insurance of this kind. In fact, says Vice-president

Littell, "a large percentage of applicants are rejected; and some of these are supposedly 'model' institutions. Some employers who have gone extensively into welfare work imagine that their establishments are practically strike-proof, but actuarial figures do not bear out this opinion. American workers, we find, are quite apt to resent paternalism no matter how well-meaning and benevolent it is. One man with such an organization applied for membership a little while ago and was dumfounded because we told him that he was uninsurable. 'There should be a strike here in about three months,' our investigator told him, after examining the plant from every angle. But the best of investigators may be wrong, as this case proved, for the strike actually happened within six weeks."

The process of insuring a plant against strikes is interesting. For five years, before any policy was offered, insurance actuaries were working to digest the strike statistics in America—from 1881 to 1919. The period from 1901 to 1905 was especially considered, as these were the biggest strike years on record. The rate of insurance which would have been necessary for that period was made the base from which the premium was eventually determined. No effort was made to find the lowest possible rate, as all money beyond the actual cost of insurance is returned to the policy-holders.

To prevent collusion and fraud the amount of the insurance offered was set at eighty per cent of the actual losses involved

HV1711

A

Arnold, Marguerite

Making the blind man an asset instead
of a liability.

Date Due

HV1711

A

Arnold, Marguerite

AUTHOR

Making the blind man an asset

TITLE

instead of a liability.

DATE
LOANED

BORROWER'S NAME

PAMPHLET BINDERS

This is No. 1527

also carried in stock in the following sizes

HIGH	WIDE	THICKNESS	HIGH	WIDE	THICKNESS
1523 9 inches	7 inches	$\frac{1}{2}$ inch	1529 12 inches	10 inches	$\frac{1}{2}$ inch
1524 10 "	7 "	"	1530 12 "	9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	"
1525 9 "	4 "	"	1532 13 "	10 "	"
1526 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	"	1533 14 "	11 "	"
1527 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	"	1534 16 "	12 "	"
1528 11 "	8 "	"			

Other sizes made to order.

MANUFACTURED BY

LIBRARY BUREAU

Division of REMINGTON RAND INC.

Library Supplies of all kinds

